



The Big Sky Country

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE ART WITTICH
HOUSE DISTRICT 68

HELENA ADDRESS:
CAPITOL BUILDING
PO BOX 200400
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0400
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

HOME ADDRESS:
3116 SOURDOUGH RD
BOZEMAN, MT 59715
PHONE: (406) 599-9836

COMMITTEES:
HUMAN SERVICES - CHAIR
STATE ADMINISTRATION
RULES

March 7, 2016

Director Tom Livers
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
1520 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-0901

Re: *Wastewater Spill*

Via Email & Fax

Dear Director Livers:

As you know a major sewage spill occurred in Big Sky last Thursday. The river is still discolored, and many people in the Gallatin Valley are concerned.

While we understand that you had an information meeting up in Big Sky last week, we request that you conduct an informational meeting in the central part of Gallatin County (i.e., Belgrade) to help the downstream residents better understand this situation.

We specifically request that you conduct a public meeting this week and provide answers to the following questions:

1. How did the spill occur (i.e., design, operations, weather, etc.)?
2. What is the impact of the spill to public health and the environment downstream?
3. What is the plan going forward to mitigate the effects of the spill, and prevent it from happening again?

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Representative Art Wittich

Representative Kerry White

Senator Jedediah Hinkle

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
COUNCIL. 2015-16

May 4, 2016

Exhibit 15

At 04:54 AM 3/10/2016, Livers, Tom wrote:

â€œâ€œ

Joe, Hope --

I had hoped to email this response to Representative White, but I can't find an email address for him. Could you please print a copy of the entire email chain and get it to him at EQC this morning? I'm not going to be able to carve out time to catch up with him today. If you could shoot me a quick reply to confirm, I'd appreciate it.

Just FYI, I also don't have an email for Senator Hinkle, so I'll mail him a copy.

Thanks.

-Tom

Representative White --

Jenny Chambers of DEQ passed on to me your comment at EQC that you had requested a public meeting in Belgrade and not heard back from the Department. I apologize for any confusion. On Monday I received an attached copy of your letter in an email from Katie Lesh, who apparently works with Representative Wittich. I replied to Katie the next morning (please see email chain below) and asked that she pass the information on to all three signatories. I assumed that had happened. I hoped to catch you in the hall yesterday during a break, but my schedule didn't permit it, and today is looking the same. Given that I won't have time to catch up with you in person, and to avoid future confusion, I wanted to respond to you directly here, and I am also copying Representative Wittich and Senator Hinkle,

At this point I believe a public meeting would be counterproductive. Your letter posed three questions to be answered at the meeting -- what was the cause, what is the impact to public health, and what is the plan going forward. We've widely communicated that we do not believe there is an impact to public health; there really isn't anything more to say on that until we start getting lab results back from our water quality sampling. We expect the lab results will confirm what we expect, but we'll know more when those come back. As far as the cause of the failure, we've communicated our working theories; now that there is somewhat better access to the site, we're gathering additional information to either support those theories or pose new ones. Similarly, as we learn more about the cause and the current condition of the pond and the pipe, that information will inform the plan going forward.

We've tried to be responsive to public concerns, especially in the immediate vicinity of the spill when it first happened. Once we have more information from the sampling results and site visits, we'll share that as well.

Thanks again for your interest, and I apologize for any confusion on the response.

Tom Livers